

9/25/06 - (8)

Acton Community Housing Corporation

Nancy Tavernier, Chairman

TOWN OF ACTON

Acton Town Hall

472 Main Street

Acton, Massachusetts, 01720

Telephone (978) 263-9611

achc@acton-ma.gov

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Nancy Tavernier, Chair
SUBJECT: Lillian Road Residences LIP application
DATE: September 21, 2006

The ACHC has voted to approve the proposed LIP 40B project, Lillian Road Residences and urges the Board of Selectmen to support it also. This project will add two new 3-BR single family homes to the Town's housing stock, one affordable and one market. We find this proposal to be very different from any the Town has dealt with previously. We have been working with the developer off and on for 2 years. Our initial caution focused on the ownership structure since two new units would be added to an existing house lot, the existing house will remain, and will be included in the 40B. Given the most recent 40B's that have included the demolition of existing houses, we were pleased to see the existing house would remain. The condominium ownership issues were resolved by the developer's attorney. Our concerns about the septic system design and joint ownership of it by the two new units have been addressed and the design has received Board of Health approval.

We began to review this proposal long before the new Comprehensive Permit Policy was adopted by the Selectmen and the Planning Board. While this location is not one of the preferred ones spelled out in the policy, this is a very small scale project with a design that is consistent with that of the existing houses in the neighborhood. The existing houses on Lillian Road are small single family homes, in ranch and Cape designs. The new units will be located at the end of a cul de sac at the low end of the street. The location abuts Route 2 but the units are considerably up hill from it and heavy vegetation buffers the highway noise during the growing season.

An appealing aspect of the proposal is that the density, at approximately 2 units per acre, is consistent with the lot size on Lillian Rd. although the zoning has been changed to 2 acre zoning since these homes were originally built. This proposed density is not out of line with the neighborhood. The most redeeming feature is the single family home design. The last single family home affordable development we had was in 1999. Since then we have acquired one small existing home but all the rest of the affordable units have been townhouses or duplexes. There is something very special about owning your own yard and having your own space to care for. We recently did a survey of our existing mailing list and more than 50% of them wished for a single family home. 35% of our waiting list consists of households of 4 or more, they would be given preference for this 3-BR unit.

We appreciate the patience of the development team for Lillian Road Residences as ACHC carefully considered every aspect of the proposal. Under LIP, the Board of Selectmen and the ACHC share the initial local approval responsibility and both must sign the application before it can be filed with the DHCD. ACHC has voted to do that. The developers will continue to meet with other boards once the application is signed and the project is a reality. They are still required to file for a comprehensive permit through the ZBA which will be done just as soon as the DHCD grants approval. At that time, all the town boards will be solicited for official comments and public hearings will be held. In ACHC's opinion, the reward for any developer's willingness to use LIP should be an expedited process and we are hopeful that sufficient groundwork has been laid to allow that to happen. This is less costly to all involved.

The ACHC held an information session on the proposal that was well attended by residents from Lillian Rd. and Bulette Rd. We also discussed the proposal at two subsequent ACHC meetings where the neighbors were given ample time to state their concerns and ask questions of the developer. The main neighborhood concern is run-off and drainage; these concerns need to be addressed in the more comprehensive engineering that takes place for the ZBA application. This development will not increase run-off but there is an existing problem in the neighborhood. Because Lillian Rd. slopes down to the cul de sac and does not have a storm drain system in place, all of the runoff from the uphill section of the neighborhood flows to the bottom of the hill and then either goes down the driveway of an existing home that is lower than the cul de sac or goes over the parcel proposed for development to a retention area on state owned land that ultimately drains downhill to Rt. 2. This existing problem could be mitigated by the developer to some extent. He has offered to allow a drainage easement to improve the situation for the downhill resident. It is possible that their drainage concerns might be resolved by the attention given as a result of this proposal. It is also possible the proposed drainage system for the development may improve the overall groundwater and run-off flow in the area. There are no wetlands on site.

Throughout the discussions, Mr. Pittorino has offered to work with his neighbors to mitigate their concerns. Other concerns focus on the vegetative buffer between the parcel and the abutter and also the placement of a hydrant in the cul de sac. The developer has stated his willingness to solve these problems.

The ACHC is committed to the provision of affordable housing but only if it does not sacrifice the environment, health, or safety of the Town. We are comfortable with this proposal and urge the Selectmen to endorse Lillian Road Residences by authorizing the Chairman to sign the application.

Thank you for your continued leadership and support for affordable housing.